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6 LESSONS LEARNED, HEADQUARTERS
17TH COMBAT AVIATION GROUP [43-8]
APO San Francisco 96240

11 18 Aug 1966

AVGD-SC 9

SUBJECT: Operational Report for Quarterly Period Ending 31 July 1966,
RCS CSFOR-65

12 15p.

TO: Commanding General
I FFORCE V
APO 96240

18 OACSFOR

19 OT-RD-660154

SECTION I: Significant Organization or Unit Activities

1. Mission: The mission of the 17th Combat Aviation Group is to provide aviation support as directed to United States, Army of the Republic of Vietnam, and other Free World Military Assistance Forces for the conduct of combat, logistical or other counterinsurgency operations.

2. Organization and Strengths as of 31 July 1966.

a. Group Organization.

HHC 17th Avn Gp

HHC 10th Avn

48th AML
117th AML
129th AML
281st AML
135th FW-MT
183rd FW (O-1)

HHC 14th Avn

161st AML
174th AML
282nd AML
18th FW-LT
92nd FW-MT
220th FW (O-1)
131st OV-1

HHC 52nd Avn

113th AML
155th AML
170th AML
219th FW (O-1)
179th AMW

HHC 223rd Avn

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b. Group Strength

STRENGTHS AUTH/ASG

| Unit | Off | WO | EM |
|--------------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Hq 17th Gp | 23/36 | 6/3 | 86/77 |
| 10th Avn Bn | 146/230 | 227/135 | 1510/1626 |
| 14th Avn Bn | 163/210 | 168/111 | 1488/1517 |
| 52nd Avn Bn | 124/160 | 129/87 | 1046/902 |
| 223rd Avn Bn | 21/6 | 2/0 | 86/17 |
| TOTAL | 477/642 | 552/316 | 4216/4139 |

c. Aviator Strengths.

AUTH 90%/ASG

| Unit | |
|----------------|---------|
| Hq 17th Avn Gp | 18/28 |
| 10th Avn Bn | 286/294 |
| 14th Avn Bn | 290/296 |
| 52nd Avn Bn | 247/246 |
| 223rd Avn Bn | 16/5 |
| TOTAL | 857/879 |

3. Command relationship.

a. Col John A. Marr, Infantry, assumed command of the 17th Combat Aviation Group on 4 June 1966, from Col Gerald W. Shea, Infantry. The change of command ceremony was attended by Major General Harry W.O. Kinnard, Commanding General, I FFOCEV; Major General John W. Norton, Commanding General, 1st Air Cavalry Division; Brigadier General Charles Symroski, Artillery Officer, I FFOCEV and Brigadier General George P. Seneff, Commanding General, 1st Aviation Brigade. Col Shea was awarded the Legion of Merit.

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b. Change of command within subordinate units during this period were:

(1) On 23 May 1966 Lt Col Samuel G. Kalagin, Infantry, assumed command of the 14th Combat Aviation Battalion from Major Ronald J. Rogers, Infantry.

(2) On 21 June 1966 Lt Col Foy Rice, Infantry, assumed command of the 52nd Combat Aviation Battalion from Lt Col Robert W. Cody, Infantry.

(3) On 12 July 1966 Lt Col B.L. Harrison, Infantry, assumed command of the 10th Combat Aviation Battalion from Lt Col Albert J. Fern, Infantry.

4. Organizational changes:

a. 183rd Reconnaissance Airplane Company (O-1): This unit closed at Dong Ba Thin, RVN on 8 June 1966, was assigned to the 10th Combat Aviation Battalion, and became operational on 15 July 1966. The mission of this unit is to provide aircraft in support of the visual reconnaissance program in the 23rd ARVN Division area and aircraft in general support of US Forces in combat operations. A platoon from the 219th Aviation Company was attached to the 183rd Aviation Company.

b. 281st Aviation Company (AML) (UH-1): This unit closed at Nha Trang, RVN, on 8 June 1966 and was assigned to the 10th Combat Aviation Battalion. Upon arrival, the unit absorbed the assets of the 2nd platoon, 171st Aviation Company (AML) and Operational Control of the Company was passed to the Commanding Officer, 5th US Special Forces Group, with headquarters at Nha Trang, RVN.

c. 282nd Aviation Company (AML) (UH-1): This unit closed at Qui Nhon, RVN, on 8 June 1966 and was assigned to the 14th Combat Aviation Battalion. Upon arrival, the unit absorbed the assets of the 2nd platoon, 172nd Assault Helicopter Company and was given the mission of providing support to the advisory effort in I and II Corps.

d. 179th Aviation Company (AMM): This unit arrived in country on 25 July 1966 and staged at Dong Ba Thin, RVN. The unit is presently in the process of moving to a permanent base at Pleiku, RVN and is expected to be operational on 31 August 1966.

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5. Narrative Summary of Significant Operations:

Group units participated in the following major operations:

| <u>OPERATION</u> | <u>UNITS</u> | <u>DATES</u> | <u>UNITS SUPPORTED</u> |
|------------------|--|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| AUSTIN VI | 117th Avn Co 129th Avn Co 48th Avn Co | 1 May - 18 May | 1/101 Abn Div |
| FILLMORE | 129th Avn Co 161st Avn Co | 25 May - 21 Jul | 2d ROK Mar Bde 2/327 Abn Inf Bn |
| PAUL REVERE | 155th Avn Co 170th Avn Co 119th Avn Co | 10 May - 31 May | 3/25 Inf Div |
| PAUL REVERE II | 119th Avn Co 155th Avn Co 170th Avn Co 129th Avn Co | 1 Jun - Continuing | 3/25 Inf Div |
| HAWTHORNE | 48th Avn Co 117th Avn Co 129th Avn Co 161st Avn Co | 2 Jun - 20 Jun | 1/101 Abn Div APACHE Teams |
| BEAUREGARD | 48th Avn Co 117th Avn Co 129th Avn Co | 24 Jun - 15 Jul | 1/101 Abn Div APACHE Teams |
| JOHN PAUL JONES | 48th Avn Co 117th Avn Co | 21 Jul - Continuing | 1/101 Abn Div 2d ROK Mar Bde |

While the above operations were in progress, various other smaller operations conducted by Vietnamese and Korean Armed Forces were supported. Assets ranging from an airmobile platoon for Eagle flights to company size airmobile units for battalion operations were shifted to support planned ARVN and ROK operations and to exploit targets of opportunity. In addition, aircraft were also provided in support of Operation Hastings conducted by the III Marine Amphibious Force in I Corps.

6. Significant Activities:

a. Logistical activities

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(1) S4

(a) A soil stabilization program utilizing penepreme has been initiated by this headquarters at forward airfields to reduce the sand and dust problems. The reduction of this problem should increase main rotor, tail rotor and engine life of UH-1 helicopters when operating in this type environment.

(b) The establishment of forward support elements within each major operational area has relieved the aviation units of maintaining large quantities of supplies, thus reducing the administrative burden. In addition, it has allowed for the rapid shifting and massing of aviation assets without the corresponding movement of large quantities of supplies.

(2) Maintenance activities:

(a) An aircraft augmentation package consisting of 7 UH-1D's was received by three of the 10 assigned aviation companies (APL) with the remaining companies programmed to be augmented in August, September and October. When completed this augmentation will enable the company to lift the combat elements of a rifle company in one sortie.

(b) Average aircraft availability rate was 77.4 during the reporting period. Average EDP rate was 7.4% while the EDM rate for the group was 15.9%.

(3) Aviation Medicine:

(a) Aeromedical Facilities:

1 Camp Holloway opened a new dispensary housing the consolidated 52nd Combat Aviation Battalion medical section, 94th Medical Detachment (OA), and the 755th Medical Detachment (OA). This dispensary provides a fixed facility to the Camp Holloway Army Airfield complex capable of complete flight physical examination with the exception of X-ray.

2 Dong Ba Thin- The completion of the consolidated aviation dispensary has provided a fixed medical facility to the rapidly expanding Army Airfield. The units operating from this facility include the 10th Combat Aviation Battalion medical section, 130th Medical detachment (OA), and the 433rd Medical Detachment (OA).

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3 Phu Tai - Lane Army Airfield. The 14th Combat Aviation Battalion, having completed its move to Lane Army Airfield, is currently constructing a new cantonment area. The program calls for a consolidated dispensary for the 14th Combat Aviation Battalion Medical Section, and the 756th Medical Detachment (CA). Again this facility is capable of providing area coverage and a fixed base for all airmobile operations.

4 All airmobile operations are supported in the field by aid stations established at the loading zone or the staging area. The combination of a fixed facility capable of complete flight physicals at the airfield plus the highly mobile, rapidly established, aeromedical aid station in support of combat operations has proved highly successful in total aeromedical care.

b. Signal:

(1) Communications

(a) Planned expansion of telephone circuits has been completed with the installation of circuits to control and coordinating activities involved in providing aviation support from this group. (See inclosure 2 - Telephone Diagram).

(b) Secure teletype circuits have also been expanded to provide page-copy service for classified combat orders and reports. Maximum use of existing circuits has been accomplished by relaying messages through I FORCEV facilities to Army Aviation Elements co-located with the I and II Corps Tactical Operations Centers. (See inclosure 3 - Teletype Diagram).

(2) TOE Equipment and Personnel.

(a) As the development of required communications progressed, equipment and personnel inadequacies became evident. A MTOE is now being processed to provide the Group Headquarters with essential personnel and equipment to adequately perform the communications mission. Concurrent action has been initiated to obtain essential equipment through submission of USARV Form 47 (Request for Equipment in Excess of Authorized Allowance) since it is recognized that MTOE approval cannot be accomplished in time to meet immediate needs. Present operations are sustained through utilization of equipment borrowed from local units.

(b) TOE shortages in alternating and direct current generators seriously impairs the capability to operate communications equipment if deployed to tactical field locations. Present operation is dependent upon commercial A.C. power. Emergency power is provided by one 1.5 KW A.C. generator borrowed from I FORCEV.

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c. Safety Activities:

(1) During the reporting period there was a significant rise in O-1 accidents within the command. This is attributed partly to the large turnover of aviator personnel in the O-1 companies. Continued emphasis is being placed on unit transition training programs and proficiency checks.

(2) One mid-air collision occurred during the month of June at Tuy Hoa involving an UH-1B from the 131st Assault Helicopter Company and a UH-1B from the 1st Cav Division. Eight crew members lost their lives and both aircraft were destroyed. In July another mid-air collision occurred involving a O-1 and UH-1D helicopter. Seven lives were lost and both aircraft were destroyed. The O-1 had no observer aboard which may have been a significant factor in the accident. This headquarters has directed that VR missions will not be flown without observers.

(3) The month of June with an accident rate of 15.9, was the lowest accident rate of any month since the group was activated. The accident rate and combat attrition for the reporting period is depicted below.

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENTS

| MONTH | R/W | FW | TOTAL | RATE | FATALITIES |
|-------|-----|----|-------|------|------------|
| MAY | 5 | 3 | 8 | 33.6 | 2 |
| JUNE | 1 | 3 | 4 | 15.9 | 4 |
| JULY | 4 | 3 | 7 | | 7 |

COMBAT ATTRITION

| MONTH | R/W | FW | TOTAL | FATALITIES |
|-------|-----|----|-------|---------------------|
| MAY | 3 | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| JUNE | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| JULY | 1 | 2 | 3 | 2 Missing in action |

SECTION II: Lessons Learned and Commanders Recommendations:

1. Lessons Learned.

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a. Item: Transportation Bookings for COMUS Returnees

Discussion: Responsibility for booking transportation for individuals returning to COMUS was delegated to this headquarters during the month of July 1966. The efficiency and responsiveness of this procedure is totally dependent on the accuracy of the reporting of known losses by the battalions. Since neither the battalions nor this headquarters are staffed to handle the workload imposed, the system initially failed to meet the demand. As a result, many departures were delayed due to lack of booking spaces. Internal adjustments were made in the reporting procedures and systems were refined so that now a fairly responsive program is in effect. Workloads, however, have increased considerably and manpower in excess of TOE authorization has been added to accommodate this load.

Observation: The coordination meetings which were held at HQ USARV to assist in implementing this change of responsibility failed to provide enough information in sufficient time to allow the planning necessary for a smooth change-over. The problems uncovered have solved themselves at the expense of departing personnel.

b. Item: Non-receipt of Assignment Instructions.

Discussion: Distribution of assignment instructions to the battalions where orders are published has been unsatisfactory. While improvements have been made in the last month of this quarter, situations where instructions are received just prior to DEROS are still too common. The resulting personal hardships have had an extremely unfavorable effect on morale. The delays have been common to officers and warrant officers up to the grade of major and all grades of enlisted men. The system of reporting individuals for reassignment has been closely monitored by this headquarters but has failed to obtain the desired results.

Observation: A sense of urgency must be attached to the handling of assignment instructions at all levels of command throughout USARV to ensure that once assignments are received from Department of the Army they are expeditiously processed to the individual.

c. Item: Recommendation for award of the Air Medal for Sustained Operations.

Discussion: The administrative burden placed on aviation companies by the requirement to submit a detailed accounting of flight time and missions on a USARV Form 151 is cumbersome. Work copies of this form are maintained in the individual's flight record. When sufficient hours/missions are accumulated, the company commander or his designated representative should be authorized to verify the accuracy of this information and simply certify that the requirements of the regulation have been met. The work copy of

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the form would then be maintained on file until orders are published effecting the award. Such a procedure would alleviate considerably the clerical workload and expedite the processing of awards.

Observation: A letter expressing this recommendation has been forwarded to the 1st Aviation Brigade on 21 July.

d. Item: Flying Evaluation Boards for Individuals who Voluntarily Request Relief from Flying Status.

Discussion: This headquarters has been required to convene four Flying Evaluation Boards to review cases where aviators have voluntarily requested relief from flying status. AR 600-107 provides that Department of the Army may waive the Board requirement when it is in the best interest to the Army and without prejudice to the individual. When requests for waiver of Board action have been forwarded, a strict interpretation of the word "prejudice" has evidently caused a reluctance to waive the board requirements. Approval of an aviator's request to be removed from flight status without Board action should be more prejudicial to the individual than approval of his request after an appearance before a Board.

Observation: Aviators who voluntarily request relief from flying status and indefinite suspension should not be required to appear before a Flying Evaluation Board.

e. Item: POM Requisitions

Discussion: The shipment of the 161st and 170th Aviation Companies (AML) to Vietnam with Minimum Essential Equipment (MEE) and remainder of equipment on POM requisition has not accomplished what was programmed. Tracer action indicates POM requisitions have been shipped from CONUS but in most cases these items have not been received by the owning unit.

Observation: Units should not be deployed to RVN without their major items of equipment until the supply system is more responsive.

f. Item: Aviator Fatigue

Discussion: For the Army aviator in combat operations in RVN the syndrome of fatigue has become a critical problem. Factors contributing are heat, C ration meals, living in insecure areas, limited laundry and bathing facilities, and stressful flying situation i.e., combat and weather. Further, positive motivation of the aviator is weakened by consideration of rapid return to the combat zone.

Observation: The flight surgeon must continue close personal surveillance and advise the commander of his findings and make timely recommendations as to the fatigue level of the individual aviator.

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g. Item: O-1 Accidents

Discussion: The increase of O-1 accidents during the period was due partly to the large turnover of aviation personnel, and a shortage within the companies of school trained instructor pilots.

Observation: An immediate adjustment of qualified O-1 instructor pilots be made throughout Vietnam so that each O-1 company will have a minimum of one to carry out transition training and conduct a pilot proficiency program.

h. Item: Mid-air collisions:

Discussion: One of the two mid-air collisions that occurred involving a O-1 and a UH-1D may have been prevented if an observer had been aboard the O-1.

Observation: Visual reconnaissance missions should be flown with an aerial observer aboard. It is impossible for the aviator to control the aircraft, keep a look out for other aircraft and make visual observation on the ground.

i. Item: Free Loader parts supply.

Discussion: This scheduled parts air delivery service will reduce the time required to obtain new parts for units and return repairables for quick turnaround, thus providing aviation units with supply support necessary. The aviation units do not have assigned aircraft for this mission and the use of the Free-Loader eliminates the necessity of taking aircraft away from combat operations thus materially assisting the aviation units in successfully accomplishing their assigned mission.

Observation: The Free-Loader supply system greatly enhances maintenance throughout Group and must be maintained to eliminate unnecessary administrative flights on combat aircraft.

j. Item: OV-1 Mohawk Ejection Seat Survival Kit

Discussion: The 131st Aviation Company is operating on single ship, long range missions over hostile territory. The ejection seat, Martin Baker MKJ5B, is capable of carrying a seat survival kit, but none are currently available. Supply of the kits is expected late in August.

Observation: That emphasis be placed on providing the OV-1 pilots with the required ejection seat survival kit as soon as possible.

2. Commanders Recommendations:

a. Chest Protectors.

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(1) Problem: Air mobile light units have deployed to RVN without chest protectors for aircraft crews.

(2) Recommendation: Chest protectors be issued to units in the states prior to deployment.

b. Gunners for Helicopter Companies

(1) Problem: Aviation units that require gunners deploy to RVN without gunners.

(2) Recommendation: Gunners should be assigned in CONUS and trained with the unit prior to deployment.

c. Survival Radio

(1) Problem: The GNC-10 radio used by US Army pilots utilizes a UHF frequency of 243.0. Army aircraft have no direction finding capability to locate source of a UHF frequency.

(2) Recommendation: A FM survival radio be developed or army aircraft be given a UHF homing capability.

John W. Marr
JOHN W. MARR
Colonel, Infantry
Commanding

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GROUP PERFORMANCE

| | | HOURS | SORTIES | CARGO (TONS) | PAX |
|----------|-------|--------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| May | RW | 13908 | 41579 | 2429.0 | 58425 |
| | FW | 9714 | 10682 | 3277.0 | 23998 |
| | TOTAL | <u>23622</u> | <u>52261</u> | <u>5706.0</u> | <u>82423</u> |
| June | RW | 14339 | 45024 | 3141.1 | 64028 |
| | FW | 10533 | 10903 | 20672.4 | 28875 |
| | TOTAL | <u>24872</u> | <u>55927</u> | <u>23813.5</u> | <u>92903</u> |
| July | RW | 15376 | 50487 | 4020.50 | 73904 |
| | FW | 10701 | 9365 | 2807.09 | 32753 |
| | TOTAL | <u>26077</u> | <u>59852</u> | <u>6827.59</u> | <u>106657</u> |
| TOTAL RW | | 43623 | 137090 | 9590.60 | 186357 |
| FW | | 30948 | 30950 | 26756.49 | 85626 |
| TOTAL | | <u>74571</u> | <u>168040</u> | <u>36347.09</u> | <u>271983</u> |

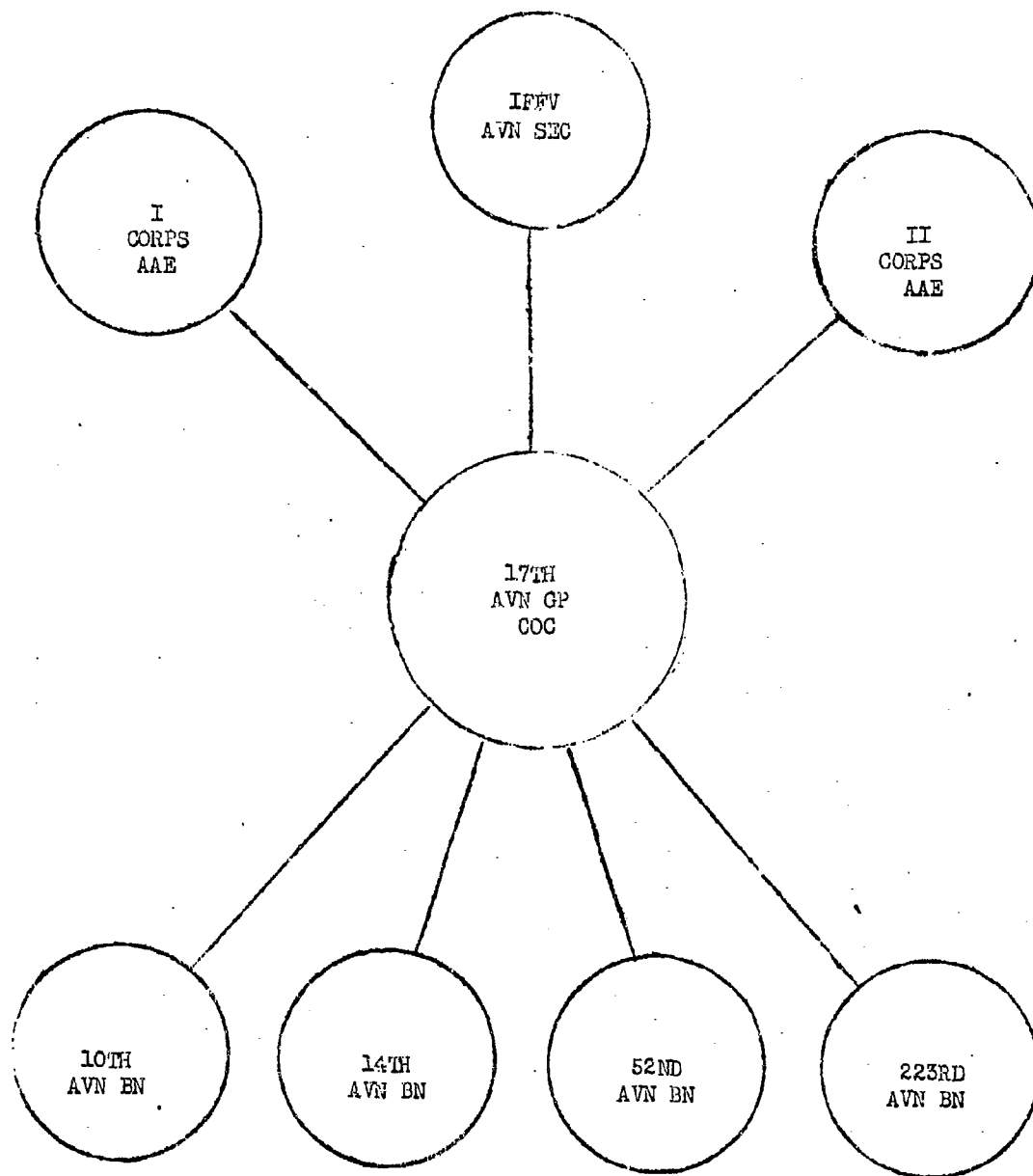
Inclosure 1

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Inclosure 2 Telephone Routing Diagram

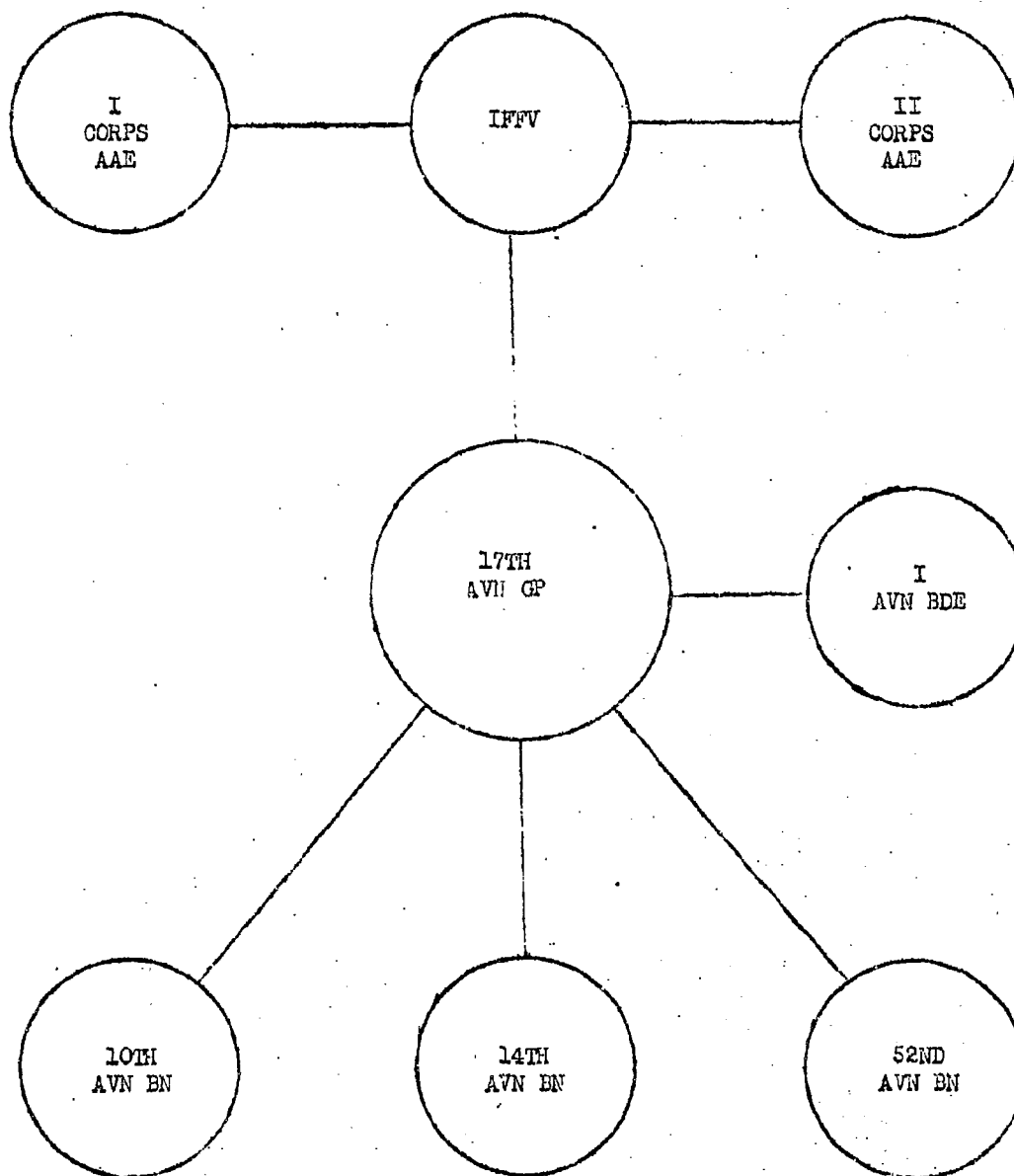


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Inclosure 3 Teletype Routine Diagram



NOTE: All Circuits Secured with Cryptographic Equipment

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SUBJECT: Operational Report for Quarterly Period Ending 31 July 66, RCS
CSFOR-65 (U)

Headquarters, I Field Force Vietnam, APO San Francisco 96240 24 Aug 1966

TO: Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development, Department of the Army, Washington D. C. 20310

Concur with the comments and recommendations in basic report.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

1 Incl
no

William H. James
WILLIAM H. JAMES
Colonel, AGC
Adjutant General

where supported from
the 1940s onwards

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